



NASA Anti-Harassment Policy and Procedures: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is harassment?

NASA policy defines harassment/harassing conduct that is unwelcome, verbal or physical, regardless of whether it is based on an individual's race, color, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, status as a parent, genetic information, gender identity, or retaliation, when: (a) the behavior can reasonably be considered to adversely affect the work environment or (b) an employment decision affecting the employee is based upon the employee's acceptance or rejection of such conduct.

What are some examples of harassment as defined above?

Harassment that violates NASA policy can occur in a number of ways.

Various examples include:

- Making jokes and remarks, or displaying images, pictures, or other materials that unreasonably interfere with work performance or create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.
- A supervisor coercing an employee into an unwelcome sexual relationship and then rewarding the employee with a promotion.
- A supervisor taking disciplinary action or denying a promotion to an employee because he or she rejected sexual advances from the supervisor.
- Retaliating against an employee for alleging harassment or participating in factfinding interviews.
- Being the target of bullying, offensive, or demeaning remarks because the employee is a single mother with children.
- Denying an employee the opportunity to participate in an offsite training because he or she is over 40 years of age.
- Verbal abuse/put-downs, name-calling, or the use of racial epithets or slang that creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile work environment.
- Intimidating behavior such as asking for, or offering, sexual favors in return for positive performance appraisal or promotion.
- Displaying power over an employee because of gender through disparaging gender-related remarks and threatening behavior.

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Where should I go to report harassment?

NASA employees who believe they have been the victims of harassment should report the matter immediately to their supervisor, the Center Anti-Harassment Coordinator, or other official(s) as designated by the Center Director.

What if I believe I have been harassed, but not based on the reasons above?

NASA's anti-harassment policy and procedures are not intended to establish a general civility code for the Agency. Therefore, petty slights or minor annoyances are not covered. In addition, harassment covered under NASA policy is limited to the definition and protected categories, such as race and gender, provided above. If the alleged conduct does not involve one of these categories, or you are not sure whether it does or not, but the behavior is nonetheless unwelcome and offensive, you may still wish to report it to your supervisor or your Center Anti-Harassment Coordinator, who can then decide whether the Anti-Harassment Program office is the appropriate venue. There are also a number of other options you may wish to explore to address your concerns. Your Center's Ombuds and Human Resources Offices can provide additional information regarding those options.

What is the intent of the NASA Anti-Harassment Program and its procedures?

The anti-harassment procedures set up a process for management to address employee allegations of harassment and take immediate and appropriate corrective action, including use of disciplinary actions to eliminate harassing conduct regardless of whether the conduct violated the law. The goal of anti-harassment policy and procedures is to address harassing conduct at the earliest possible stage, before it can become "severe or pervasive" harassment within the meaning of anti-discrimination laws.

Is reporting harassment the same as filing an equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaint?

No. The anti-harassment procedures do not affect rights under the EEO complaints process. The anti-harassment process is entirely separate and apart from the EEO complaints process. This means that an employee who reports allegations of harassment in accordance with the Agency's anti-harassment procedures has not filed an EEO complaint. An employee who wishes to file a discrimination complaint should contact his or her Center EEO Office within 45 days of the alleged harassing conduct.

What is the role of managers and supervisors?

Managers and supervisors are responsible for maintaining a work environment free of harassment. Managers or supervisors who observe or are made aware of allegations of harassing conduct are required to act promptly, effectively, and in accordance with NASA anti-harassment policy and procedures to determine the scope of the alleged harassing conduct and take corrective or disciplinary action as appropriate and necessary.

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What is the role of the Center Anti-Harassment Coordinators?

The Center Anti-Harassment Coordinators are responsible for serving as the Point of Contact (POC) for all anti-harassment matters. Their role includes, but is not limited to, assisting managers and supervisors in addressing allegations of harassment and maintaining Center records. For instance, the Coordinator helps ensure that a proper factfinding process is completed and that prompt and appropriate corrective action is taken if the Agency determines that harassing conduct has occurred.

If I report harassment, will the information provided be kept confidential?

All information shall remain confidential to the greatest extent possible in accordance with the Privacy Act. Information is restricted to those who have a “need to know” and may include factfinders, the Center Anti-Harassment Coordinator, witnesses, the alleged harasser, and supervisors who are required to take action on the matter raised.

If I’m a contractor who believes that I’m a victim of harassment by another contract employee, where should I go?

NASA anti-harassment policy and procedures only cover Federal civil servants. NASA does not have the authority to address contractor-on-contractor issues pertaining to harassment; however, it is expected that all contractors conducting work on NASA premises will refrain from engaging in harassing conduct.

For allegations of harassment involving a contractor employee, NASA supervisors should immediately contact the appropriate Contracting Officer.

If I’m a contractor who believes I have been harassed by a Federal civil servant, what should I do?

Contact your Center Anti-Harassment Coordinator for information and guidance.

If I report harassment and then change my mind about going forward with the allegations, what happens?

The Agency is still obligated to look into the allegations raised.